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House bans U.S. aid for effort to topple Sandinistas

Washington (AP)—The House voted overwhelmingly last night to ban the Pentagon and the CIA from giving weapons or training to anti-Sandinista guerrillas "for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua."

The 411-0 vote came after an hour of debate during which several House members charged that the CIA was helping the guerrillas fight the leftist Sandinista government.

There have been numerous published reports in recent weeks that the United States is providing covert aid to the guerrillas in their campaign against Nicaragua launched from bases in neighboring Honduras. The Reagan administration, which has strongly criticized the Sandinistas, has refused to confirm or deny the allegations.

The House vote added the restriction to a \$230.75 billion defense spending bill, which was later approved and sent to the Senate. No such restriction is in the comparable measure pending in the Senate.

The restriction was proposed by Representative Edward P. Boland (D, Mass.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. His proposal was a substitute for a stronger restriction that had been proposed by Representative Thomas R. Harkin (D, Iowa).

Mr. Harkin, claiming that the United States is "becoming mired in the jungles and swamps of Central America," had proposed banning any U.S. help to guerrillas "for the purpose of assisting that group or individual in carrying out military activities in or against Nicaragua."

Mr. Boland's amendment was not as restrictive, according to several House staff officials who declined to be identified, because it would only bar help "for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange be-

tween Nicaragua and Honduras."

What would be the exact effect of the restriction, even if it is later enacted into law, was not clear. The officials said the CIA might be able to argue that its support of the anti-Sandinista rebels was intended to help stop the flow of weapons from Nicaragua to leftist insurgents in nearby El Salvador—and indeed, administration officials have been quoted anonymously in the past to the effect that that is what is going on.

The officials said the CIA might contend that the agency would not be responsible if its help was also used to attack the Nicaraguan government.

"What we are doing is clearly illegal," Mr. Harkin said. "If you don't like the Nicaraguan government, this is the worst way to oppose them."

Representative James L. Oberstar (D, Minn.) said it "is mindless and insensitive" for the CIA to aid the anti-Sandinista guerrillas. "This is a dangerous policy leading toward a military confrontation. A war between Honduras and Nicaragua will surely be the result."

Representative Barbara A. Mikulski (D, Md., 3d) said that "our covert activity violates the charter" of the Organization of American States.

"We're opening ourselves up to another Vietnam," said Representative John L. Burton (D, Calif.). "If we don't stop the CIA now, we will end up in a full-blown military adventure."

Representative George Miller (D, Calif.) said: "We've got to get control of those agencies who've convinced the White House to substitute covert action for policy and diplomacy."

CIA support for covert action "revives the specter of American imperialism," said Representative Richard Ottinger (D, N.Y.).